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**HUMBLING RECOLLECTIONS  
OF MY MINISTRY.**

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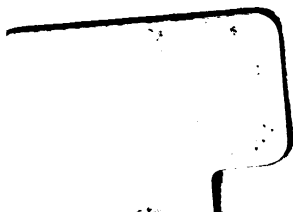
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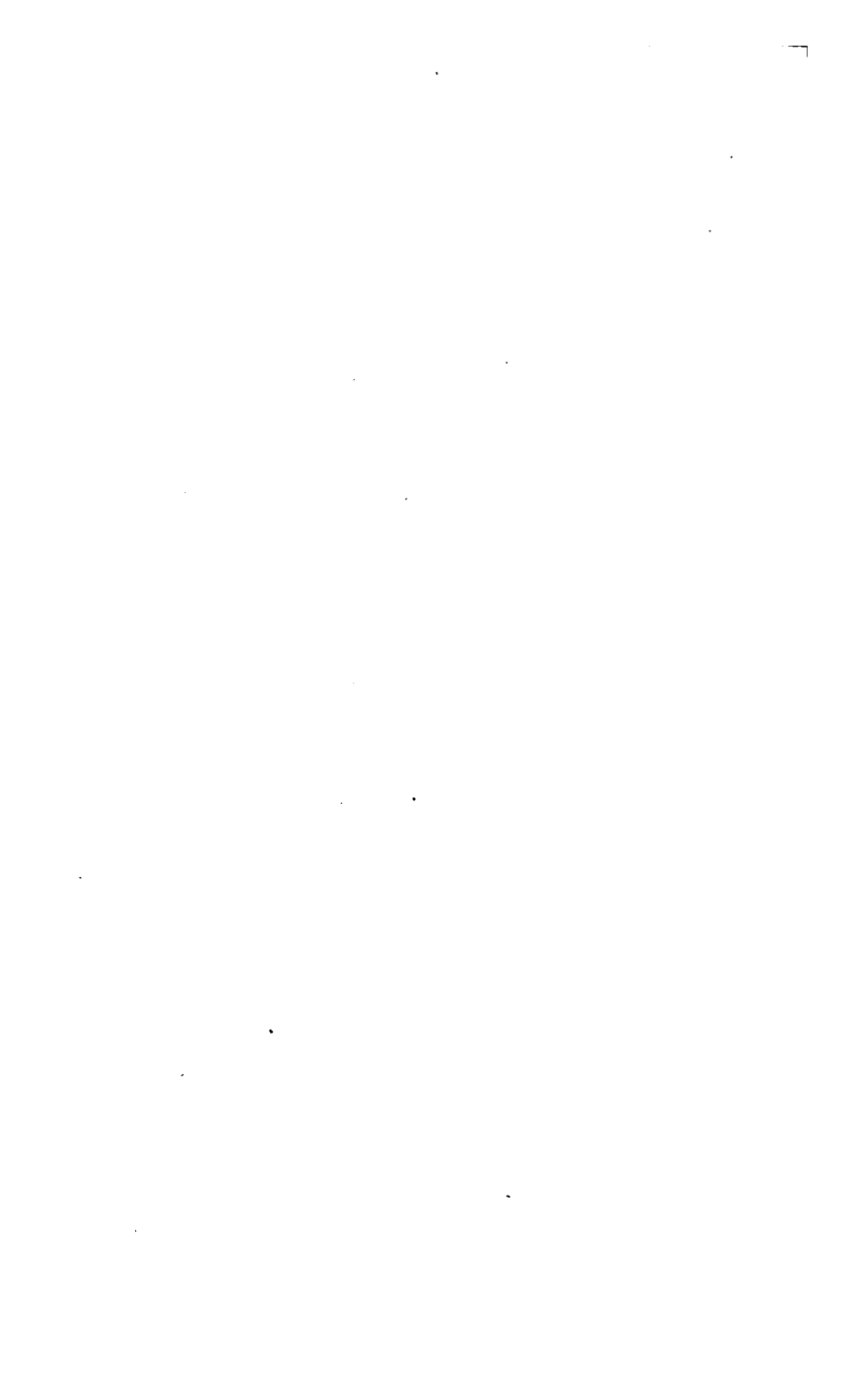


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**HUMBLING**  
**RECOLLECTIONS OF MY MINISTRY.**



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HUMBLING RECOLLECTIONS  
OF MY MINISTRY.

BY A CLERGYMAN  
OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

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Published for the benefit of others.

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## TO THE PUBLISHER.

I have read the "Humbling Recollections of his  
"Ministry, by a Clergyman" with much interest, and  
trust that they may be extensively useful.

O how happy will it be for our Church if all its  
present difficulties and dangers, temptations and snares,  
lead its Ministers to this frank acknowledgement of  
evil in what is past, and to such a blessed change as  
took place in the writer of these Recollections.

Having the happiness of knowing this beloved brother,  
I can assure the reader that he may fully depend  
on the faithfulness of all his statements.

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

*Watton Rectory,*

*Feb. 24, 1842.*



# RECOLLECTIONS

## OF MY MINISTRY.

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As I was lately reading the Memoirs of the late excellent and gifted Henry Venn, I happened to open the book at the page which is headed by the words —“ Mistakes into which young Ministers are apt to fall.” The title of the document led me into a train of painful meditation. I am now no longer a young Minister, the autumn of life is closing in around me, I have numbered more years than half the time allotted to man ; but as the mind leapt over the years long past, and brought before me in all the freshness of yesterday, the time when I commenced my ministry in God’s Holy Church, I could not but sigh, when I remembered into how many mistakes I had fallen,

and how many alas, now irretrievable errors, I had committed, which embitter the declining years of life, by the painful recollections they bring before me. Many a bitter sigh rose from my heart, while I thought of these things,—many a vain regret, that I could not retrace the path of life ; and beginning again my ministerial course with all the advantage of my present experience, employ those precious years in earnestly preaching the Gospel, which were passed in comparative trifling and indifference to the object of my high calling. While I was thus musing, the thought occurred to my mind, that though I could not recal the past nor retrace its errors ; still that my “ Mistakes ” might be made useful to my brethren in the ministry, many of them, perhaps, beginning their ministerial duties, ignorant of much which they are profitably concerned to know, and, who by God’s mercy, might be rescued, if the experience of one who had trodden the same path, were held up as a beacon to warn them of their danger. The example of good Mr. Venn impressed me more strongly with the idea, that I might thus be useful to others. I therefore, again took up the book to read his paper, “ for the use of his Son ; ” but the perusal of it, while it strengthened my determination, only heightened

my shame and confusion of face. I found that *his* mistakes were chiefly those of failing to use the best arguments and methods of pressing home the truth on the minds and consciences of his hearers ; but *mine* alas, were “mistakes in practice, as well as mistakes in doctrine ;— mistakes arising from ignorance of the truth, I was attempting to teach ;—mistakes creating mischief to others by the worldliness of my life and example.” Bitterly do I lament these things now ; and it is only from the hope, that I may do good to others, and save them from the same delusion, of which I was in early life the victim, that I can bring myself to the painful task of disclosing the mistakes into which, as a young minister, I fell.

I was the youngest of several sons, and was the only one who was educated for a professional life. From my birth, my father destined me for the ministry ; and that I was to go “into the Church” was so impressed upon my mind from my earliest years that I never entertained any other idea. My fitness and qualifications for this high and holy calling, were considerations that were never presented to my thoughts. I passed through the usual routine of school education, and then went to the university, where I passed three years unprofitably,—took my degree at the age



of one-and-twenty,—left the university, and amused myself during the two succeeding years in all the frivolities of fashionable life. I had many acquaintances, and some accomplishments, so that I was not without invitations to every species of amusement; I accepted these and loved the world, which in its turn loved me. I thought nothing about my future profession; or, if a passing thought glanced through my mind, I still fancied I could unite the two services of God and the world in one and the same heart; and while I told every one who asked me that, “I was going into the Church,” my sole object at present was to go as much as possible into the world. Oh what a preparation for preaching the Gospel and determining as I was bound to determine, to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Having nearly completed my 23rd year, my father, anxious to see his wishes realized, and to have a son “in the Church,” reminded me that it was time to look out for a Curacy. I had begun to tire of a London life, and was glad enough of the change; and happening to mention to some of my friends my desire to obtain a title, one of them immediately exclaimed—‘I think I can get you a title.’ Enquiries were made, the matter was soon arranged, my papers were

sent to the Bishop's Chaplain, and accepted; the list of books, which I was to read for ordination was procured, and in a few days I was engaged in the country, reading for Orders, and amusing myself with shooting.

The 22nd of September never comes round, the day on which I was admitted to Deacon's Orders, without causing the deep glow of shame to mantle on my cheek, when I remember how utterly unfit I was to present myself before the Lord on this most solemn of all occasions! It is a marvel to me now that the ground did not cleave asunder beneath me and swallow me up, so unfit was I to enter upon the sacred duties to which I had pledged myself, and yet how wonderful is the deceitfulness of the human heart! I remember well, when the question was asked:—"Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory and the edifying of his people." I answered, believing what I said:—"I trust so." The evening previous to my ordination, I passed in playing at cards with three other candidates for Holy Orders. The next morning I solemnly and deliberately took upon me these responsibilities. I might perhaps have introduced a

passing petition occasionally into my formal Prayers, that God would bless me, but, I am sure, I did not dedicate myself to God and his service, or intend to relinquish the old habits of my life.

After my ordination, I went home to receive the congratulations of my friends, and then went to my Curacy. It immediately occurred to me that I must give up, to a certain degree, many of the amusements of which I had so fully partaken, and it never struck me that they were inconsistent with my Profession. I hoped by external attention to the duties of my curacy, to secure the approbation of man, which was far more dear to me than the approval of God ; and, that I should thus be able with comfort to myself, to unite the service of the world and God in one and the same heart ! Accordingly, I went among the people, talked to them, and became popular, visited them in sickness, was kind to them, and was beloved by them in return. Yet my ministrations were chiefly confined to the body. I found great difficulty in talking about the soul ; in the first place, because, I did not love their souls, and secondly, because I really scarcely knew what to say to them. I remember now that I am writing of this time, one or two cases that I attended, and the kind of consolation I attemp-

ted to give them. I saw nothing distinctly of the grand truths of the Gospel, and, therefore, could not state them to others. A passage in Melmoth's *Great Importance of a Religious Life*, expressed my views at that time. "Christ hath suffered upon the Cross for our sakes, and by his death and sufferings hath purchased this grace for us, that real repentance and the sincere endeavour of perfect obedience shall be accepted instead of perfect innocence." I was therefore constantly putting Obedience and Repentance in the place of Faith, and making the poor sick man look to something in himself instead of to Christ. The consequence was such as might be expected. The poor creatures wore "doubt's galling chain," and were always fearing they had not done enough. Sometimes I met with cases, where through the instrumentality of pious ladies, or other ministers, the sick man seemed to have imbibed notions of God's free Grace and Faith without the deeds of the law, and his Sovereignty in electing his people to eternal life. All this I looked upon as unauthorized interference on their parts, and Antinomianism on his. I in my ignorance, attempted to combat these opinions; the poor sick man saw through my ignorance, and was disappointed at my ministrations; meanwhile, I was angry at his

indifference to me, and pleaded my Church Authority, though he was actually imbibing by the teaching of the Holy Ghost the spirit of the very Articles I was bound to preach. Yet, in these cases, I saw all the fruits of the Spirit, which I never saw in those which seemed to depend on my teaching,—the sweetest spirit of love to all around them, the meekest patience, the firmest faith, the most elevated hope,—a hope full of immortality. But I could not see through this at the time. The natural man could not receive the things of the Spirit of God.

If such were my private ministrations, the reader may imagine what were my public exhortations. Of course, I was not ignorant of the outline of man's eventful History, and I had all along a notion of his depravity; but I was afraid of publicly stating what I felt about this, because the Apostle's statement—"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth *no good thing*," was a doctrine much condemned, and I did not distinctly see how by any "repentance" the heart could be changed; then I feared to preach the necessity of being born again, lest I should appear to be preaching against regeneration in Baptism. An indistinct notion of what actually takes place in Baptism was at the root of all my garbled statements of

truth : for even when I had a clearer notion of justification by faith, this was always a stumbling block to clear expositions of the truth. I saw many, nay, the mass of the people exhibiting all the fruits of the unregenerate heart, and yet being declared to be regenerate, how could I address them according to the state in which I actually saw them living and dying ? My sermons, therefore, were the strangest jumble of materials that can be imagined. The doctrines of the text partially stated ; the inferences from it placed upon a wrong foundation ; and strenuous exhortations to repentance, without ever reminding the people either of its insufficiency as a ground of hope, nor of the way in which they were to seek it.

Another stumbling block in my way as to any success in preaching was "the World," I knew what the Scriptures said about "the World," I was sure that my people were entangled by the World. I saw the World ensnaring the lower orders of my Parishioners, but I was actually afraid to warn them of the fatal consequences of their indulgences, because, I felt how inconsistent this would be with my own conduct, for they might with the greatest truth have said to me,—“Physician, heal thyself.” During this time, I enjoyed as freely as I dared every species of worldly

amusement.—Theatres,—Ball rooms,—race courses, —cards,—billiards,—shooting. I was constantly dining out, and all these engagements of course prevented “my applying ( as I was bound to do ) all “my diligence to frame and fashion my own life “according to the doctrine of Christ ;—or to make “myself as much as in me lay, a wholesome example “to the flock of Christ.” Yet all this time, I was followed and applauded, and held up as a specimen of activity in my Parish ! How plainly can I now see, what I was then so unwilling to admit, how this sinful worldliness was ruining my own soul and those that heard me. Sometimes on a Sunday when the labours of the day were over, I used to resolve that I would take the beginning of the week for my Sermons, and prepare them with more care. But when Monday came, perhaps, a previous engagement in the morning, and a dinner engagement at night, prevented my setting to work. Tuesday came. Just as I about to begin, somebody called and carried me off in the morning ; while the Ball-room perhaps, solicited my presence in the evening. Next morning I was up late ; my head ached, and I was unfit to write, and so the week went by. Saturday came : no Sermon ready ; then all was hurry and confusion.

Something however must be done. Books therefore of Sermons were consulted ;—a few paragraphs from this Author — a few more from that ; these strung together with a few pages of my own, made up my Sermon. Sometimes my confusion was augmented by a sudden intimation from my Rector that I was to preach twice. What was to be done ? There was no time to write two Sermons,—therefore, I was obliged to look over the old ones, alter the text perhaps ;—make a new beginning and ending,—strike out any remark that happened to be pointed, and make it as unlike itself, and myself as possible.—I hated myself all the time for my negligence ; I never entered the pulpit on these occasions, without wishing that I was descending instead of ascending the steps, and if two persons whispered or looked at each other, during the Sermon, my guilty conscience told me they had detected me, and remembered the Sermon.

Sometimes too, I had to feel the effects of this love of the world in my parochial ministrations. A poor man perhaps was sick. I went to see him. While engaged thus I was happy, and perhaps said in reply to his request come again soon—“ I will see you to-morrow.”—To-morrow came ; an engagement of some kind or other, which I had forgotten crossed



my mind. O "never mind," I thought to myself, "I will go and see him in the afternoon." In the afternoon, perhaps, it rained; or I was delayed longer than I expected in the morning. In the evening, I was engaged out at dinner,—Well, I will go the first thing to-morrow after breakfast. I went, opened the cottage door and saw,—not my sick patient,—no,—but his pale corpse. "When did he die?" I asked, "Last night Sir, (replied his widow) poor fellow he did so look for you all day, Sir; and we kept telling him you were sure to come, because you promised you would." "But why did you not send and say he was worse?" "We did, Sir, last night, but you were gone out." My heart smote me. I felt guilty and humbled, but even this had no effect, I went on as before.

At this time a pious family came to reside in the neighbourhood;—I heard that the younger members of it were very serious, and I could not help feeling a sort of misgiving in my mind, that my preaching and conduct would fall far short of their views. We exchanged calls, and became acquainted. In the course of conversation even upon the commonest subjects, there was a vein and tone of piety, far, far above my practice; they listened with a sweet humble

deference to my opinion, as their pastor, and said little in support of their own, unless it were to ask, whether the saying of Christ, or of St. Paul, did not seem to sanction the view they had taken of the subject. They never breathed a word, as to any comfort or edification they had derived from my Sermons. I felt it was impossible they could derive any from my example. I returned home dissatisfied and dejected.

Looking over a little Journal I used to keep of my Parish visits, I find a short account of one of these conversations. "Called on Lady K——, had "a long conversation on religious subjects with her "and her daughters, found them disposed to favour "the dangerous doctrines of Personal Election, &c. "I brought forward the danger and unscriptural "tendency of such doctrines; then they spoke of "the duty of retirement from the world, and expressed a want of communion with their Pastors." I came home as usual, dissatisfied with myself, feeling their superiority, and my own degradation; but in spite of all this, I danced,—dined,—shot,—and wasted my time as before. How long this would have gone on, it is impossible to say, had not the Lord in mercy led me to see and deplore

my errors by one of those methods which he retains in his own hands, to win his people to himself. There was a young man in the Parish, in whom I had long felt a deep, and growing interest. He was beloved by all who knew him, and was remarkable for his steadiness, sobriety, and good conduct; but it was evident he was not a pious man. He came to church, once every Sunday, and passed the rest of the day in his own pleasures, he never came near the Table of the Lord, and, though he was one of those like the young man in the gospel of whom it is said—Jesus “beholding him loved him,” yet it was obvious that like him he lacked one thing, and, that however amiable, he was still not a follower of Jesus. As he was engaged in mercantile pursuits, and never had a day’s illness, I had little opportunity of conversing with him, but at length a fit of sickness first threw him upon a sick bed, and then brought him to the gates of the grave. I immediately went to him, he received me kindly, but alas, I soon found that though very amiable, yet his heart was hard, stubborn and deceitful. I found him self-righteous and utterly ignorant of his real state; he talked of his being prepared to die, and seemed to have no fears for the result. Nothing that I could say,

seemed to have the least effect ; I was sure he was in the bond of sin, but yet all my usual topics failed to awaken the slightest feeling of contrition. I retired from his bedside, grieved at the heart, and disappointed, and returning to my own room, threw myself upon my knees, and prayed the Lord to direct me what to speak, and what to read. At my next visit, instead of talking much, I invited him to pray with me, and then kneeling down offered up a prayer for the divine guidance and teaching, and for a blessing upon our reading. I then rose and opened at the 3rd chapter of St. John, pressing home the doctrine of the *necessity* of being born again from the 3rd verse. Then I turned to 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new," for the *evidence* of a change, and to Acts xxvi. 18. for the *extent* of it, viz. "To turn man from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." I asked whether he had experienced any such change. He confessed he had not. This led to a discussion on the extent of sin. I traced it back to Adam's one original sin, and shewed him how death was the award of one transgression, and argued from it the danger of those

who had spoken Oath after Oath, broken Sabbath after Sabbath, neglected Sacrament after Sacrament. He shook his head mournfully, his chest began to heave, and the tear of penitence trembled in his eye. My heart could refrain no longer, I mingled my tears with his, and falling again on my knees with strong crying and tears, besought the Lord not to suffer these emotions to be transient, but to bring forth fruit to his honour and glory. Little did I think then, how the Lord was answering my prayer by preparing the way to illuminate my own ignorance while I was attempting to teach others. I came home, thoughtful and prayerful. I felt sure that some string hitherto untouched had vibrated in his breast, and I began to think and to pray what should be my next step, if I found him humbled and convinced of sin. Nor could I help being aware how very differently I began to feel upon the points I had been urging upon him. I saw the hardness of the natural heart and its hatred to holiness exhibited in the conduct of one of the most amiable of men. I saw the extent of sin more fully. I saw the necessity of conversion, and I could not help feeling how little evidence I exhibited in my own conduct of the vital change, the necessity of which I had been pressing

upon him. I became humbled and ashamed of myself and was conscious how little able I was to "allure to "brighter worlds, and lead the way," if this object of my anxiety should manifest at future interviews, the contrition which I hoped he was beginning to feel. And then, when I began to arrange in my own mind the topics I intended to urge, viz. repentance and future obedience, it struck me in a way that I had never felt before, how utterly inefficient either could be to *obtain* mercy. As to the first, it could not undo what had been done; and as to the second, how could any future obedience cancel past transgression; the old topic "of our sincere endeavours of perfect obedience being accepted, instead "of perfect innocence," crumbled into absolute worthlessness, as a ground of acceptance in the sight of God, for I could not help feeling if sincerity is to be the test, then the poor Heathens might plead their sincerity, evidenced by their self-inflicted torments, and so the death of Christ would be of none effect, because we might thus have been justified without him. While I was thus anxiously musing, the film seemed to fall from my eyes, and the glorious doctrine of "Justification by faith only," became more and more clear. Evidencing its sincerity by

repentance and obedience, but being quite distinct from them as a ground of acceptance before God. I immediately sought for further information ; I read the 3rd Chapter of St. John and the epistle to the Romans and Galatians with new eyes and new feelings; delusions under which I had been labouring for years appeared to melt like wax before the sun ;—Christ was exalted ;—man humbled ;—I saw Him to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and, I wondered at my stupidity and ignorance, and mourned over my sin, in having preached another gospel, and garbled the truth, as I had done. Not that all this became clear to me in a moment ; but as I gradually endeavoured to lead my poor friend, the Lord in his mercy kept leading me, till I could enter into the sublime conclusions of the Apostle ; “ There, is therefore, now “ no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, “ who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. “ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace “ with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now I began to understand the method of God with the sinner, so forcibly described by St. Paul, and which I had hitherto considered nationally,—“ whom he did “ foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to “ the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did

“predestinate, them he also called; and whom he  
 “called, them he also justified; and whom he justi-  
 “fied, them he also glorified.” Now too, I saw the  
 meaning of our 17th Article, and stood in amaze-  
 ment at myself, that I could ever have overlooked it.  
 “Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent  
 “a benefit of God, be called, according to God’s pur-  
 “pose, by his Spirit working in due season; they  
 “through grace obey the calling; they be justified  
 “freely; they be made sons of God by adoption;  
 “they be made like the image of his only begotten  
 “Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good  
 “works, and at length by God’s mercy attain to  
 “everlasting felicity.”

Those among you, my dear brethren in the minis-  
 try, who have yourselves undergone the same change  
 of opinions, will form some idea of the happiness it  
 now was to me to go day after day to the bed side of  
 my sick friend, and pour out before him the unsearch-  
 able riches I had discovered in the gospel of the Lord  
 Jesus Christ, nor blessed be his holy name, was he in-  
 different to the sweet and heavenly theme. The ar-  
 row of conviction had fastened in his heart—Sin be-  
 came a sore burden too heavy for him to bear, and  
 often with eyes upraised and hands clasped did he



listen to the prayers I offered day by day, and breathe out his fervent Amen, while I prayed to the Lord for pardon and forgiveness ; for deeper penitence, more firm faith, and power to be enabled to live unto Him who died for us. Little did the sick parishioner think how truly the prayer of his minister was expressing his sense of his own worthlessness, and his prayer for his own forgiveness—Thus many weeks passed, my sick friend gradually recovering health of body and mind, and his Pastor reading and praying in private for greater devotedness to the sacred cause, which he had pleaded so faultily ; and for greater energy in those works and labours of love, to which by his Ordination vow he had so solemnly devoted himself. My friend returned to his usual avocations, and then came the difficulty. The world wooed him to return to its ways and amusements, and his friends and relations all tried to engage him once more in its trammels. After much persuasion he consented to join in their pursuits, but conscience refused to allow him to enjoy them—Among these, was a card club to which he belonged—but the pleasure of cards was gone ; he saw these things now in their true light, and one evening he abruptly left the room in which it had met, and came to me to ask my advice how he

was to act, stating his difficulties and desiring my counsel while the tears rolling down his face, showed what a mental struggle was going on within. At that time my brethren, I was a card-player—a dancer—a man of the world!—imagine how I felt at the question, how he was to act. Thank God, I did not hesitate a moment. I bid him relinquish every worldly amusement that he felt to be doing despite to the Spirit of God, who was leading him to better things. While I gave him the advice, I resolved at once and for ever to have done with all these things myself, and from that time to the present hour, I have bade adieu to them all. It would be difficult for any, but those who have experienced the same struggles, and been enabled by God's grace to make and to keep the same resolutions, to form a conception of the comparative peace and joy and self respect which I now enjoyed. I was now able to preach to others, without being afraid of their detecting my Inconsistencies. The whole tone of my public and private Ministrations was altered. In the pulpit, I hesitated not to declare man's total depravity, as to any desire to seek after God;—the necessity of being regenerated in heart and ears as well as outwardly by water;—the Sovereignty of God;—justification by faith only,—

works as the *necessary inseparable* evidence;—the necessity of giving up the friendship of the world, and renouncing all those pleasures which militated against progressive sanctification. The work of the ministry became my delight, never was I so happy, as when in my master's work. Cottage lectures were instituted in different parts of the parish;—the aged and infirm were thus instructed who were unable to come to church, and an evening lecture once a week soon collected the labouring men. During the whole course of my ministry up to that time, I can solemnly declare, that I do not know that I was the means of good to one living soul. Oh, how I mourn over the past, while I make that fearful statement, and when I remember that hundreds died who looked to me for instruction, but who never heard the whole truth from my lips :—but now, the consequences were astonishing—scarcely a week elapsed without some poor man or woman coming to me under the deepest anxiety for their soul, and I thank God, I can now go to cottage after cottage, and see the same marvellous change in its Inhabitants which had taken place in myself. From that hour to the present, the duties of the ministry have been to me the sources of the most unspeakable pleasure—I have been in the palaces

of the noble, and in the houses of the great—I have witnessed there the lust of the eye and the pride of life—but the happiest hours I have ever passed on earth, have been spent in the cottages of the sick, and at the bedsides of the dying;—in the solitude of my own chamber, communing with God and my own soul, or in the exercise of my public ministry in the house of God.

I was led by God's grace to the change of sentiments I have stated, in the midst of my days, when life and the world presented to my eye their most dazzling colours—I was enabled to make a deliberate surrender of them all, and to choose the Lord for my portion. Never for one moment have I regretted the determination.—I never knew what happiness was, till I found it in a heart reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Most truly I can say in the language of one of our Old divines—"The world in comparison of Him is only one grand Impertinence." Years have passed since that time.—Death has entered my peaceful dwelling, and carried off the delight of my eyes. Sickness has bent the frame which once scarcely knew how to appreciate the word—Sorrow has softened down those buoyant spirits which once were so irrepressible.—Grey hairs

are scattered here and there upon me,—but in the midst of all, God has fulfilled all his promises ; supported me through scenes of death ; comforted me in hours of sickness, and been my very present help in every time of trouble. Let no one think that in detailing the success which has attended my ministry, I desire to take one particle of credit or praise to myself—There is one who knows I do not—I count not myself to have attained, and I can truly say if I could invent a word more expressive than “ less than the least” (Ephes. iii. 8.) I should apply it to myself. No ! I speak thus, because I am persuaded that the Lord never will honor the ministry of any man who preaches the word deceitfully, or who derogates from the glory of his dear Son by making salvation in any part however minute, depend upon human merit. While on the other hand I do believe he will honour the foolishness of preaching wherever Christ is exalted and the sinner humbled, and where Christ crucified is set forth as the alone hope of glory. I again repeat that I do not know of a single instance in which my ministry was blessed (though all along I had the *credit* of being most active in my parish duties and of being impressive as a preacher)

while I continued preaching a diluted gospel, nor, can I be deceived in the number of instances, I could adduce, of conviction leading to conversion, when the Lord enabled me to keep in view those three grand requisites in preaching so truly expressed by the saintly 'Simeon—the Humiliation of the Sinner—the Exaltation of the Saviour, and the Promotion of Holiness.

My motive in making this statement as I have said, is solely to warn others of the mistakes into which I have fallen,—mistakes in doctrine, mistakes in practice. Hundreds of young men are entering into holy orders every year. In my own immediate neighbourhood, I see many who are pursuing precisely the same course that I pursued. I often long to tell them what I know, and what I have felt. I am sure they cannot be preaching the word "in season and out of season" while they act thus. I know the snares of society ; how it unfits the mind for devotion, how it encroaches on time that belongs to God, and how it unsettles the mind ; but I do not know them sufficiently well to tell them these things personally, and therefore I desire to write to them, in the hope that in some hour when conscience is speaking loud, and when the world is shut out, their eye glancing upon the

title of this paper, may induce them to read the humbling recollections of the ministry of one, who so well knows the unhappiness they feel, and who earnestly desires that they should be released from the fatal chains which once held himself in their grasp.

Bear with me, dear brother, whoever you may be, while I venture, in the love I bear you, to urge upon you the importance of being decided for God. There never was a time in which this was more important. In the first place then, rest not till you have a clear view of the leading doctrine of the Bible justification by faith only. The Church of God stands or falls by it and so does every individual who composes it. The ministry of the Word is effectual or ineffectual in precise proportion to the clearness with which it is preached; study the epistles to the Romans and Galatians with prayer; remember the bias of your own heart is in favour of human merit. Wrestle against it; never rest, if you find yourself giving it the slightest footing in your judgement or your heart, till the Spirit of God have utterly expelled it. Do not mix up repentance and obedience with faith; they depend on it, as the fruit on the blossom, but they no more *procure* it than the fruit does the blossom.

Beware of preaching truth out of its due proportions. Predestination, Election, Final Perseverance, God's Sovereignty are all scripture doctrines, to be preached as occasions of Scripture exposition require, but not beyond their due proportion: many were the anxious hours I passed pondering over these doctrines; as I knew God more, I thought less about them; and set an ever increasing value on Faith and Love. Never be weary in preaching those sweet doctrines; for Faith only can justify, and Love only constrain to keep the divine Commandments.

Strive to have clear views about Baptism. Misapprehension of the effects of this holy sacrament lies at the root of the Oxford Errors. Read the Articles of the Church, as well as her Offices; and see the spirit in which she holds the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Till your mind is made up upon that point, I do not believe you will ever feel yourself at *full* liberty to preach some of the most precious truths of God's holy word.

Study deeply the Scripture with a view to your pulpit ministrations. But how can you do this, while your heart is in the world, and your time passed in its society? I have tried it and I know it *cannot* be done. Nor is this a discovery of mine,



but of all in all ages who have tried the fatal experiment. Ambrose who died in the 4th century, in a charge to his clergy says—"I think it becomes  
 " the prudence and gravity of Clergymen to avoid the  
 " public banquets frequently made for strangers ; en-  
 " tertainments of this kind take up much time, and  
 " also evidence a fondness for feasting, secular and  
 " voluptuary discourse is sure to creep in ; to shut  
 " your ears is impossible ; to forbid, will be looked  
 " on as imperious ; why do you not employ the time  
 " which is free from clerical employments in reading ?  
 " Why do you not revisit Christ, speak to Christ,  
 " hear Christ, we speak to him when we pray ; we  
 " hear him when we read the divine oracles. What  
 " have we to do with other men's houses ? let them  
 " rather come to us who want us ? What have we  
 " to do with chit chat ? We received the ministry  
 " to attend on the service of Christ not to pay court  
 " to men."

Jerome, at a later period, speaking on the same subject, says, " A Clergyman easily subjects himself to contempt, who never refuses invitations to dinner, however frequent." I have found this to be quite true—painfully true. While I was fluttering about amidst all the follies of life, I am conscious that I

postponed the great work of pulpit preparation till I had no time to prepare what might profit my people ; but when I saw the value of souls, and had shaken off the chains which love of the world had entwined around me, oh ! what pleasure I had in pursuits which were once so irksome and only undertaken because I could not avoid them. I remember well the time when an idle Sunday was to me a delight, now I look forward to my public ministrations with joy unspeakable. Now I no longer have to write against time on Saturday, but I arrange on the Sunday evening, my subject for the ensuing Sabbath ; and I can say with truth, that I find materials for my Sermons in almost every object that presents itself to my view during the week. As I walk or ride from one part of my parish to another, I see now in every natural object, something that suits my purpose. The labours of the husbandman ; the upward soaring of the lark ; the volatility of the butterfly ; the employments of the bee ; the spider's web ; all now have tongues to teach me something ; and while I talk with my parishioners, or read and pray with the sick, some new view of human nature or some new aspect in which I trace the workings of divine grace, furnish me with abundance of topics for illustration,

reproof, or encouragement. On my return home, I make notes of what has struck me and lay them by for future use, or weave them into my present discourse; this I sometimes write fully out, and then abridge it into notes, till I have made myself master of all the ideas I have put together, and then I am able to preach from my notes, while my sermon has all the advantage of having been well considered. The results are certainly striking and satisfactory: instead of a tired and sleepy audience, the most breathless attention prevails, and many a man has come to me declaring I had told him all that he was thinking of, and has become an anxious enquirer after Divine truth. Do not think I am boasting—I desire to thank God for this; and every time I preach, I am more and more constrained to cry out, “Pardon Lord, pardon,” because every Sabbath convinces me more and more of my own short-comings and insufficiency for the great work which God has given me to do. I beseech you, brethren, do not trifle as I did, do not give to the Lord that which cost you nothing, as I did, but consider that ye are ambassadors for God, that you are come to God’s people with a message from him, that the welfare of never-dying souls is committed to your care; do not trifle away time when souls

are dying, but give all your energies to the great and noble duties with which you are charged.

And let me venture to warn you against what I found so great a snare to myself, I mean the sports of the field. I was passionately fond of these, and I found them most destructive to my usefulness and influence among the people, as well as a constant temptation to neglect my duties or to the careless performance of them; and yet remember these were not the business, but the recreations of life. Once or twice a week for a few hours was the only indulgence I allowed myself; but to secure this, duties were hurried over, or more was crowded in one day than I could do with advantage to my sick people, to secure the time I had allotted to these seducing sports. Sometimes a sudden and unexpected call of duty at the moment of starting for the field, has obliged me to forego it; and I must confess that I felt unsettled during the remainder of the day, even if my temper were not ruffled by the disappointment. Once or twice a messenger has been sent to me in the midst of my amusement to perform some office over a sick child or a dying parishioner; at that time I so builded myself that I succeeded in throwing a veil over these awful inconsistencies, but now my eyes are open, and I can only view them with the most un-

qualified disapprobation. It is not often we hear what men really think and feel upon this point, but I am persuaded that I am not the only Clergyman who has wrestled and struggled against what he has felt and known to be so derogatory to God's honor and his own usefulness. In a note appended to the life of the exemplary Robert Beachcroft, (late Rector of Blunham), page 123, we have this confession, which I am persuaded is what many feel as well as himself: he says, "I had felt some scruples as to the propriety of indulging in any field sports, however moderately. I almost made up my mind to put it out of my power, by paying no tax of this kind. But my resolution failed me, and I embarked once more in what I knew to be inconsistent with the sanctity of the ministerial life. I wasted but little time, for I rarely availed myself of my power, and took my walk or ride late in the day when certain duties were concluded. But still I was uncomfortable. I was ashamed of my own weakness, I lamented the pangs of the dying animals, however just man's right may be to kill; I judged my own conduct, as a minister, to be faulty. Right or wrong, I have saved my own conscience, and I do resolve, with God's grace, if I have done iniquity, to do it no

“more.” There are many ancient testimonies too on this point. The body of our own ecclesiastical laws in the time of Edward VI, gives an accurate and elevated standard for the aim of the clergy. “Non sint com-  
 “potores, non aleatores, non aucubæ, non venatores,  
 “non sycophantæ, non otiosi, aut supini ; sed sacrarum  
 “literarum studiis et prædicationi verbi et orationibus  
 “pro Ecclesia ad Dominum diligenter incumbant.” But the truth is, brethren, that we do not want these authorities to convince us of the evil of field sports, as Ministers of the Gospel. Except in very few cases, probably in no case, there have been seasons when conscience has told the history of her own wrongs, and unless quenched by sin, still tells them ; all may be summed up in the words of the Apostle, “Brethren if our hearts condemn us not, then have we peace with God ; brethren, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things.” I desire to leave this matter between God and your own conscience.

I have only a few words to say in conclusion, bear with me while I speak them. You have seen the mistakes into which I fell in doctrine and practice—you will ask perhaps, “what is the course you are pursuing now ?” In answer to the ques-

tion, I desire to say, brethren, "I count not that I have attained;" I am daily conscious of weaknesses of temper, imperfections of conduct, and want of energy in pressing forward to the things that are before; but when I contrast the present with the past, I cannot be mistaken that I am "alter et idem," the same in identity, but another in object, affection and pursuit; old things have no charms; an hour in the parish poorhouse is more delightful to me than the same time would be in a palace, unless I might plead my Master's cause at the foot of the throne. I live amongst a crowded neighbourhood of the poor; hour after hour is passed in their cottages or by their sick beds; many every year die and are buried, and as I muse over the graves of some of them, I can say with truth that they were "the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." And to what cause can this happy result be attributed? It was the doctrine of Justification by Faith only that was the instrument by which they laid hold on Christ? I found them grovelling in the lowest depths of sin, wallowing in the mire of uncleanness, and to every good work reprobate. It was my endeavour to tell them in simple Scripture language the cause of their ruin and the certainty of future retribution. The Spirit pleaded

the cause of God with them, they became convinced, wretched mourners for sin, loathing the time past of their lives. I reminded them how infinitely their case was aggravated by the abuse of all the high privileges of which by their baptism they had been made partakers; but I could not tell them that they had sinned themselves out of the pale of God's covenanted mercies, or leave them to hope for a doubted remission at last by "the baptism of Tears," because I knew that the Bible says "the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin" without limitation, and because the Gospel is the Gospel of peace and reconciliation, "that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we may serve him without fear." I did not dare to hang "doubt's galling chain" about their necks, when the Gospel declares "that being justified by faith we have *peace* with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." No, dear brethren, mine was the blessed duty of endeavouring to turn their eyes and hearts to Jesus, and to declare to them in his own blessed words, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but "have everlasting life." That this teaching has been blessed to more than a few, I have no more doubt than I have of my own existence, because I have witnessed in men who were once haters of God and



haters of one another, the gradual growth of faith, hope, and joy in believing, coupled with meekness forgiveness, temperance, and I may add the gradual developement of all the fruits of the Spirit. I have seen the sweet consistency of their Christian course during years of health ; I have been sent for by them when sickness brought down their strength in their journey, and I have seen them in life and death looking simply and solely to Jesus, and dying in the confidence of his merits, while they utterly renounced their own ! Tell me, dear brethren, what more do we want ? By what means can we expect to be the instruments in God's hands of producing more glorious results ? When I see the blessed effects of pointing them to Jesus ; praying to the Father in the name of Jesus ; talking of Jesus ; reading of Jesus ; preaching Jesus—and when I see the effects resulting from the simple “lifting up of Christ”—how dare I lay undue stress upon the appendages of Church discipline and Church order, how dare I unduly exalt the Sacraments, and describe them as the only channels of divine grace, and speak of them as being grace, instead of a means of grace ; how dare I plead Church authority, and so make the church usurp the place of the Bible—I dare not so depart from the truth

of the Bible; I dare not act in contradiction to the spirit of the Articles to which I have declared my solemn assent; I dare not depart from the grand leading doctrines of the Reformation; I dare not encourage the least shadow of a hope that repentance, obedience, fasting, prayer, or sacraments, can ever give them the slightest shadow of a claim to the mercies of God, or to restoration to his favour, because I know that creature merit is an utter impossibility, and that salvation by grace, through faith, is the gift of God, not of works, lest we should boast; and that faith which worketh by love, is the charter of man's salvation. I have heard indeed of great apparent results from the inculcation of Church authority and the necessity of apostolic descent, (upon which the Articles are silent) to constitute a right to Churchmanship. I have been told of some who in the short space of one year have raised the number of Communicants from 30 to 200. I have no doubt that all this may be done, and where the Church, not the Bible, is the organ of authority, I dare say we may see greater things than these as we do in Roman Catholic countries. But all this may be where there is no incipient evidence even, of a change of heart; all this may be, and with it may grow up the

Rank shoots of human merit, and a resting in the form of godliness while the power is denied. Do not suppose that I am insensible to the value of the Established Church. When I remember that almost all those Presbyterian Congregations which were founded in this country two centuries ago have lapsed into Socinianism and Infidelity, I cannot but value an Established Church. I long to see the Church not *reformed*, (for I believe it is as near perfection as any human establishment can be) but *restored*. I want to see her discipline *restored*, that her services may become more intelligible—but I do not want to see childish follies, such as candlesticks, brazen eagles, illuminated scrolls, nor a greater peculiarity of dress, nor stone altars instead of the simple communion table, nor gilt crosses, nor Clergymen kneeling with their back to the congregation, because though things indifferent in themselves, they are attractive to the sinful mind of man, and will gradually draw him to attach to the symbol an idolatrous regard, as they have done in old times. No, my brethren, I thank God that I have not so learned Christ. I thank God that I have not so endeavoured to teach Christ, and I pray constantly that I may never be led either to adopt or to teach any doctrine that militates against that one grand funda-

mental doctrine of the Bible, Justification by Faith only.

And now farewell, may God bless you, and stablish and strengthen you in every good word and work. It would not add weight to this statement of my past and present views, were I to add my name. I do not think that any good would result from the disclosure. Some who read this may, from the circumstances, form some conjecture as to the writer—I rely upon their forbearance to keep my secret. All that you, my dear brethren, are I think, profitably concerned to know, is that I am a Clergyman of the Church of England, labouring in the same vineyard, and in the service of the same blessed Master. God grant, that after thus detailing my experience to others, I may not be a cast-away myself, but that I may remember the charge of St. Paul to Timothy, “Thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

THE END.

L. AND G. SEELEY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.



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